

pipeline. That assurance was given to me again yesterday by Secretary Edwards. I submit to the Leader of the Opposition that the U.S. authorities have stated quite clearly that they are fully committed to the construction of this pipeline. We have no reason at present to doubt that all the necessary steps will be taken to ensure that this pipeline is built according to the schedule that has been mentioned before.

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PRIVILEGE

MR. BAKER (NEPEAN-CARLETON)—STATEMENT MADE BY MR. KAPLAN

Madam Speaker: I am ready to rule on the question of privilege which was raised yesterday by the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker), but as he is not in the House at present, and as I usually extend the courtesy of deferring a ruling when an hon. member who had brought forward a question of privilege is not present in the House, I considered taking that course today. However, in view of the fact that I have a notice of another question of privilege which seems to be close enough to the one which was brought forward yesterday, perhaps it would be easier if I dealt with the first question of privilege before hearing the new one. I would ask other hon. members who intervened in that question of privilege whether they feel they want me to rule today or whether I should delay.

● (1500)

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): On that question, Madam Speaker, you will recall in the notice I sent to you, within the time limited by the rules, that I explained I wished to raise a very complex question of privilege involving, as I see it, the privileges of all members of the House.

In the second paragraph of my notice I set out that the privilege I wish to raise is complex and slightly overlaps the question which was spoken to yesterday. I mean just that—it bears a relationship. The submissions I intend to make today go far beyond that but indeed include a facet of the matter raised yesterday. It is my suggestion that, Madam Speaker, you might well be advised to withhold your ruling, if indeed one was necessary on yesterday's question which was not followed by a substantive motion, until I and other members who may wish to participate in what I consider to be a very serious and complex question have been heard. You should have all the facts, all the evidence and all the arguments before you, prior to making a judgment.

Madam Speaker: Yesterday it was quite clear that I could not extend the time to today for arguing the question of privilege of the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton. The one raised yesterday by the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton has been argued to my satisfaction, and I am prepared to rule on it today.

If the hon. member, as he is suggesting, feels that I should defer—and I usually do that as a courtesy to the member who has raised the question of privilege—I am prepared to do it.

Privilege—Mr. Nielsen

The hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) has sent me notice of a new question of privilege. The fact that he has stated it slightly overlaps the one raised yesterday does not mean he may discuss the question of privilege raised yesterday. I will be very strict on that. The question of privilege which the hon. member will raise, the subject of which is suggested in his notice, should not overlap or should not discuss the one raised yesterday.

I can accept the hon. member's notice, but I must warn him before hearing him that it seems from his notice he might be asking the Chair to rule on an hypothetical situation. I just want to remind him that the Chair cannot rule on hypothetical situations. I appeal to him to be very specific about his question of privilege and, of course, not to refer to proceedings which took place in a committee.

MR. NIELSEN—CONSEQUENCES OF MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS AND UNDERTAKINGS

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Madam Speaker, notwithstanding your relatively short time in the chair, I am sure you have already observed that I am always specific in the matters which I raise, that I am never hypothetical, and that, unlike the government benches, I never deal in the abstract.

The questions which I want to put before the Chair and before members today are quite serious. They affect the privileges of all members of the House. When my submissions are through, in my submission and with respect, you will be compelled to look at yesterday's proceedings. I believe you will be compelled, in anticipation of what your ruling would have been today, to have another look at it, because it has a bearing and it is one of four elements which are involved in the questions I wish to raise.

I want to emphasize at the outset that we are not speaking of actions, or statements which may have been made before public meetings, in a political campaign, or statements to the media. We are dealing with statements made in the course of the parliamentary process, and we are dealing with statements which have been made in a parliamentary institution.

Before launching into the substance of what I have to say, let me say a word about the existing situation with respect to the recourse that members do not have in connection with questions of privilege which may arise in committee. As the government House leader is aware and as you are aware, Madam Speaker, such questions raised in any committee cannot be dealt with by the committee chairman unless that committee reports to the House, and then Madam Speaker is the only officer of the House or its institutions who has the jurisdiction to make a ruling on a question of privilege which arises in the House.

One might consider whether or not it is an abuse of privilege for the government majority on a committee, regardless of the political stripe of the government majority, to refuse the desire of the minority on a committee to have a question of privilege brought before you, Madam Speaker, because the chairman of the committee cannot rule. One might consider it a Catch 22